

MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO HANDWRITING

MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL – HANDWRITING

What is cursive handwriting?

Cursive handwriting is the alternative name for joined-up writing. At Manor we teach a fully cursive style with both entry and exit joins. No upper case (CAPITAL) letters are joined and all words written in lower case start from the line.

Why teach cursive handwriting?



Cursive writing - pros

1. Letters are produced in a flowing movement, which helps the development of a physical memory of how each letter is written.
2. Letters all start in the same place (on the line) and flow from left to right, which reduces the likelihood of reversal mix-ups such as b/d and p/q.
3. Writing soon becomes quicker and easier because of the smooth flow. This means children can get their ideas down on paper rapidly and legibly – the core aim of good handwriting. Children are not regarded as being “secondary ready” unless they can produce fast, fluent, joined writing.
4. A cursive style of handwriting is recommended by the British Dyslexia Association. This is because cursive handwriting supports spelling. Children learn how a word “feels” when written, enabling them to know if the word “feels right”.

Cursive writing - cons

- Letters written in cursive style can look quite different from printed letters in books. However, font styles in books are also different to printed handwriting (eg compare letters a or g in Comic Sans, with a or g in Times New Roman, commonly used in books!)
- In the early stages, writing can look messy as the movements are slightly more complex than print-style letters.

The Pros outweigh the Cons!



What does cursive writing at Manor look like?



By the end of year 5, all pupils should have a smooth, cursive writing style, which at least uses the basic cursive joins. All letters start on the line, which makes it easier to remember.

Terminology

Entry and exit joins: the little “tails” at the start and end of each letter eg a c x z
b f

Ascenders: sticks on letters which go up above the basic level ie tall letters –
b, d, h, k, l, t.

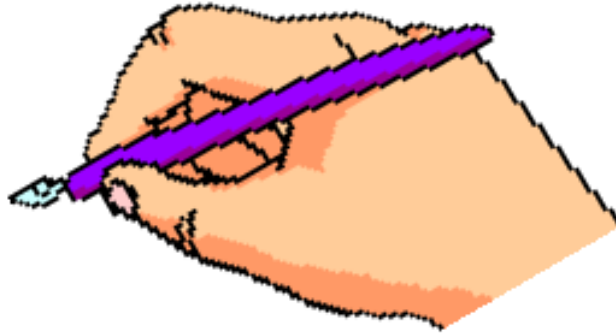
Descenders: letters with “tails” which go below the line – g, j, p, q, y

Joins

There are two basic types of join – **diagonal** ones where the pen(cil) returns to the line before going into the next letter, and **horizontal**, where the letters join above the line.

Examples of diagonal joins:
ai ar un ab ul it

Examples of horizontal joins:
ou ow vi wi ol wh ob op



How to help at home

- If your child is struggling, rather than practising handwriting, start by buying dot to dot, mazes and patterned colouring books. Encourage a steady hand and keeping within the lines, or moving smoothly and straight between dots. Progress onto narrower mazes, complex dot-to-dot and detailed colouring books aimed at older children.
- Steady hand games like Operation can be good for developing fine motor skills. Making patterns or objects with small pieces, eg matchsticks, can also help with this.
- If your child is finding handwriting difficult: buy, download from the internet or ask your child's teacher for paper or exercise books with 4 lines so that they can create letters of a consistent size with ascenders and descenders of correct lengths.
- Use cursive handwriting when practising writing spellings (see our leaflet on spelling). Practise handwriting common strings of letters eg: ing, ed, ould, ful, ment, tion, ight, ough
- Once your child can write legibly in pencil, let them experiment with pens to see which types enable them to produce the neatest cursive handwriting. Try rollerball or gel pens – they tend to flow across the page without sticking. If your child has difficulty with a tripod grip (2 fingers on top, thumb below), consider buying a specially shaped pen or triangular pen grip to help them. We have a range of pencil grips in school (see page 7).

- Make sure that when writing they sit properly. They should sit on a chair at a desk or table, with feet flat on the floor (or on a box) and the chair pulled in. Some children find a sloping surface helps. Paper should be angled slightly towards their writing hand (unless they are left-handed upside-down writers!)
- Talk to your child about the different purposes of handwriting. If it is personal and private (eg a shopping list, notes, private diaries) then the only person who needs to be able to read it is the writer. However, if it is for others to read (eg letters, stories, reports, leaflets) it must be legible (readable) for everyone. Encourage them to do both types of writing at home – but only expect neatness when the writing is for you or for school!
- Remember that there are times when cursive handwriting is not appropriate (eg on posters) where people need to be able to read it easily from a distance.
- Whether your child is left or right-handed make sure their writing arm is not obstructed or liable to knock into another child and that light shines on their work so it is not in shadow. Once children have reasonable control over their pencil or pen, encourage them to hold it about 2cm away from the tip, to avoid smudging and so that left-handers thumbs don't get in the way.
- Left-handedness does not automatically cause handwriting difficulties. However, left-handers sometimes mirror write, and may need extra practice on anti-clockwise letters eg a, c, o, d, g, q, e. Special pens are available for left-handers.
- If your child is finding writing laboured because they press too hard, a fine-liner pen can sometimes help as not only does it flow across the page, but the nib will split or snap if too much pressure is applied! Buy a few – they will probably ruin some before they get the hang of writing more lightly!
- Finally, once they have mastered cursive handwriting, the next stage is to ensure that all ascenders and descenders are the same length and clearly go above and below the other letters; that round letters (a, o, u, c etc) are all the same size; that letters are evenly spaced; that letters all slope the same way or are all upright; and that all words are evenly spaced.



WHAT ELSE DO WE DO AT MANOR?

- We provide regular handwriting practice in the lower school, and specialist programmes for children who are struggling throughout the school.
- We have a range of pencil grips available (see page 7).
- We reward progress in handwriting just as we reward progress in other areas with a series of certificates.

A GUIDE TO PENCIL GRIPS



These provide sensory feedback and help children who are holding the pencil too near the tip. (There should be some of the painted wood visible between the grip and the tip).



These ultra-grips are soft and moulded and come in two sizes. They are particularly suitable for children with fine motor control problems eg those caused by dyspraxia, dysgraphia and cerebral palsy.



These are aimed at children who tend to wrap their thumb over the top, or use their fist. They position the two fingers and thumb correctly.



These help children with reasonable control to improve their tripod grip and hold the pencil in the right place.



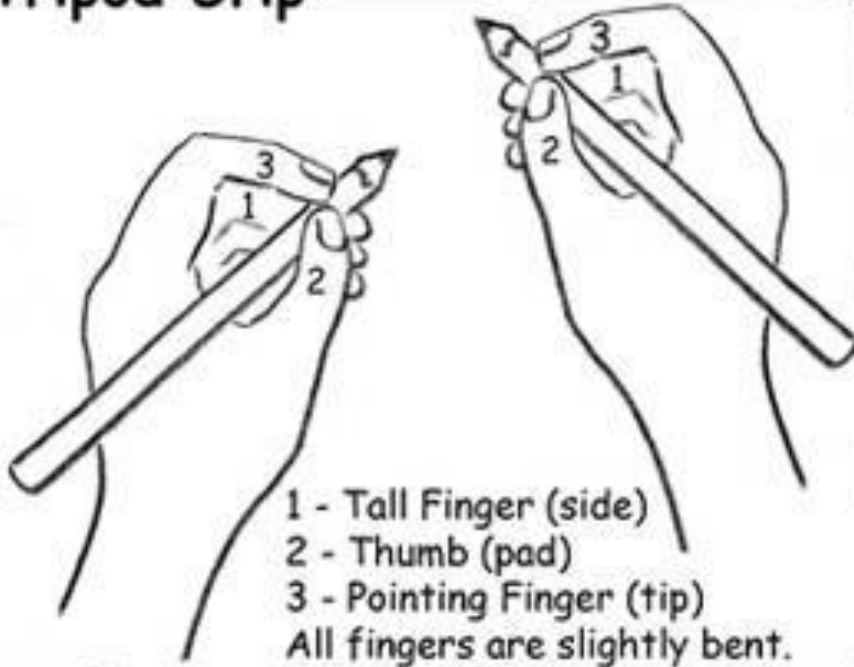
These help children who just need more width to hold onto or a bit of help maintaining a tripod grip. Our school handwriting pens have a triangular-shaped grip area like this.



These provide strong sensory feedback for children with sensory issues or those who tend to tire easily when writing due to gripping too tightly.



Tripod Grip



Don't do this!

Pressure on the pointing finger.



All fingers pulled into a fist.

